

# Heart Transplant

Heart transplants are the third most common transplant operations in the United States. There are over 1,500 cases per year. A healthy heart is obtained from a donor who has suffered brain death but remains on life-support. The healthy heart is then transported in a special solution that preserves the organ.

While the patient is deep asleep and pain-free (general anesthesia), an incision is made through the breastbone (sternum). The patient's blood is re-routed through tubes to a heart-lung bypass machine to keep the blood oxygen-rich and circulating. The patient's diseased heart is removed and the donor heart is stitched in place.

A heart transplant may be recommended for heart failure caused by:

- Coronary artery disease
- Cardiomyopathy (thickening of the heart walls)
- Heart valve disease with congestive heart failure
- Severe congenital heart disease

Heart transplant surgery is not recommended for patients who have:

- Kidney, lung, or liver disease
- Insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM)
- Other life-threatening diseases

Research suggests that hospitals that perform 9 or more heart transplants per year have better patient outcomes than those who do not perform these amounts. However, Medicare requires that hospitals perform 12 or more heart transplants per year for reimbursement. In addition, the National Task Force on Organ Transplantation has established the volume threshold for heart transplants as 12 or more per year.

[See page 20 for references, numbers 7, 9 and 17.]

Region	Average
Subregion	Annual
Hospital	Volume
<b>Central / Northeastern Region</b>	
<b>Columbia</b>	
University Hospitals and Clinics	10
<b>Kansas City / Western Region</b>	
<b>Kansas City (Jackson County)</b>	
Saint Luke's Hospital	18
<b>St Louis / Eastern Region</b>	
<b>St. Louis City / County</b>	
Barnes-Jewish Hospital	16
Saint Louis University Hospital	14

## Procedure-Specific Questions

- ◆ Who can get a new heart?
- ◆ How does a donor heart get to me?
- ◆ How will I know when a donor heart is ready for me?
- ◆ What happens just before, during and after my heart surgery?
- ◆ What will I go through before I can go home with my new heart?

(See page 3 for other questions)